



The Deadlands Epitaph

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Deadlands Dispatch

— The Big Picture —

This is that part of the book where we tell players to vamoose, and is a marked change from previous *Deadlands* products. We figure if you've bought this book, you're probably the Marshal. That's fine by us, and allows us to get right to the dark, dripping heart of things.

Some of the articles in the *Epitaph* are for players of course, things like new spells or weapons, or the article on a different way of handling junkers in *Hell on Earth*. Share those sections with your posse once you've looked them over and cleared the material for your game.

Now let's get you caught up on what's going on in the Weird, Wasted, and Way Out West.

Weird West Roundup

It's 1879 in the Weird West, and there seems to be a strange calm—maybe the kind that comes before a big storm. Let's deal with the major goings-on one at a time.

The War Ends!

Not the Rail Wars, amigo. We're talking about the American Civil War.

It all started—for most folks—with the death of General Robert E. Lee in the desert of Arizona. His private Dixie Rails train was attacked and "Marse Roberts" was gunned down by bloodthirsty assassins.

A group of heroes—maybe *your* heroes, Marshal—eventually discovered that Lee's death was ordered by the Jefferson Davis doppelganger. It seems Lee had caught on that something wasn't right with his old friend, and the horror decided the popular general had to go.

After a long and arduous trip across the West to Richmond, Virginia, the heroes managed to stop Jefferson and his Harrowed bodyguards, the "Nightwatchers."

The doppelganger was killed in the incident, followed shortly thereafter by a massive explosion from Libby Prison, where the doppelganger had stored a large amount of explosives.

The public knows nothing of the Davis doppelganger, of course. At first they simply believed Union assassins were responsible for





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this reign of terror. Then acting President Eric Michele (that's "Michael," friends) confirmed that the assassin was actually the leader of the Nightwatchers, Colonel George Alexander. Colonel Alexander was later hunted down by unknown adventurers and sent to a watery grave as he attempted to escape via the James River in a submersible.

Publicly, Michele stated that Alexander was unhappy with Jefferson Davis' secret plans to negotiate a peace with the Union. Privately, he came to the horrific realization that his commander-in-chief was actually a horrid abomination needlessly prolonging the war to spread misery and violence.

Michele used the cover story of Davis' "secret negotiations" to order Confederate forces to stand down in memory of Davis' good name.

(All of these events are explained in the Deadlands adventure, Dead Presidents.)

The Cold War

There are still quiet skirmishes between vengeful commanders here and there, and shots are still sometimes fired when soldiers in blue and gray come too close together, but officially, America is at peace. The "cold war" has begun, and spies on both sides are quickly infiltrating their rivals to ensure no surprise attacks are forthcoming.

The Great Rail Wars

Neither the North nor the South are being too quick to pare down their armies, but the cease-fire has allowed them to trim the fat a bit. One of the first side-effects of the war's end is that both nations released thousands of soldiers whose enlistments had already expired, or who were considered too old, infirm, or mentally unstable to remain in the ranks.

After the Battle of the Cauldron (see *The Great Rail Wars*), the Rail Barons' ranks were decimated. This stalled both the fighting and the progress as there were fewer guards for those who actually did the hard work of laying track. The former soldiers have now replenished the railroad's armies and the fighting has begun to heat up once gain.

Many former soldiers also headed west hoping to find rich veins of ghost rock and their personal fortunes. Most don't pan out of course, so the out-of-work soldiers find easy work in the Rail Barons' service. It's easier to pull a trigger than swing a pick, and easier to take ghost rock from someone than mine it honestly.

Here's a quick run-down on where the individual railroads stand.

The Denver Pacific & Wasatch

Bad blood began in earnest when the Denver-Pacific ended their business arrangement with Darius Hellstromme's Wasatch railroad. The DP's owner, Smith and Robards, literally threw Wasatch cargo off their rail lines—sometimes dumping hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of expensive gadgetry in the desert—and declared their former contract null and void.

Strangely, Hellstromme remained silent. Most everyone expected an immediate reprisal by Wasatch's merciless minions, but eerily, nothing happened. Confidants inside DP claim this scared Smith and Robards even more than an overt attack. They doubled their guards, added more war trains to their lines, and raised the cost on their other contracts, most notably Union Blue and Black River.

The *Tombstone Epitaph* managed to get its star reporter, Lacy O' Malley, in to see Dr. Hellstromme for a statement, but his reaction was polite and peaceful. Some believe Brigham Young's Mormons have calmed the fiery and often violent inventor. O'Malley himself believes that Hellstromme has simply lost interest in the Rail Wars and is now working on other projects.

Recent battles in the High Plains prove Wasatch troops do not share in their owner's malaise. New legions of automatons and other mechanical soldiers have squashed their rivals with their typical relentlessness.

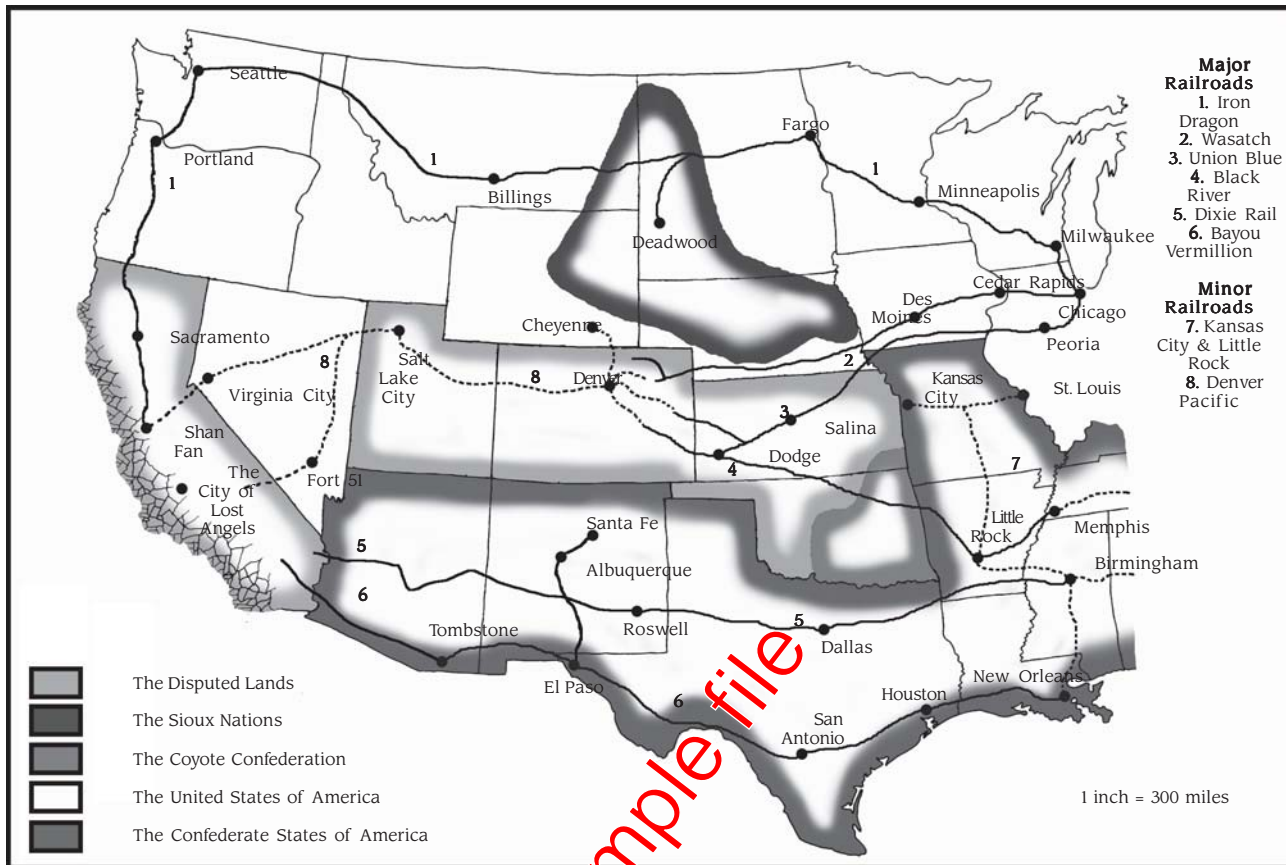
In truth, Hellstromme has a secret plan to win the Rail Wars. His plan, and its results, are featured in *Epitaph #5!*

Black River & Union Blue

In Dodge City, rumors continue to fly that Union Blue President Joshua Chamberlain and Black River CEO Mina Devlin are having a sordid affair. Chamberlain denies the rumors profusely (they *are* false), but it is true those two railroads



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have not fought since the end of the Civil War. It is also true that neither railroad has laid track past Dodge, though both have numerous bands of Enforcers across the California border along the growing Denver-Pacific line. The enforcers of the two lines have an uneasy truce, though neither acknowledge it publicly.

Rumors are also flying about a missing heir to the Devlin fortune. Mina has put out quiet rewards among numerous bounty hunters for a teenage girl who closely resembles Mina herself. Stories in the *Tombstone Epitaph* suggest the girl is a love-child of Chamberlain, raised from a babe to a teenager in a year by Mina's dark witchcraft. Chamberlain denies everything, but it is said his men search for the girl as well.

In truth, Mina has been threatened by an ancient Harrowed named the Cackler to find a raven-haired girl of her own bloodline. You can find more information in *The Black Circle*. The rest of the story waits to be told, and changes the Weird West forever once it comes to pass.

We're sorry we can't share more just yet, Marshal. We're trying not to open up so many

on-going plots in the Weird West, but this is one of the very few we have to keep to ourselves for just a bit longer.

Bayou Vermillion & Dixie Rails

As you might recall, Baron LaCroix of Bayou Vermillion managed something of a coup by bushwhacking the owner of the Santa Fe & El Paso Railroad and linking the two rail lines. LaCroix now owns the lines entirely and the former owners now serve the Zombie Master in undeath.

LaCroix has always been careful about using his "special forces" around civilians, but he had no qualms about sending his zombie rail workers into Apache territory. The Baron figured the Apaches for ignorant savages and spared little thought for what they might think about his abominations. This proved a frightful miscalculation.

The Apaches under Geronimo, who abhor the dead—let alone groaning *undead*—savaged his forces as soon as Bayou Vermillion passed



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Tombstone, Arizona. Needless to say, help from the Texas Rangers was slow in coming.

For its part, Dixie Rails quickly passed BV's furthest railhead, and might well have made Lost Angels were it not for the assassination of the rail line's president, Robert E. Lee, and the events at the Confederate capitol in Richmond.

Bayou Vermillion has finally secured most of their tracks, however, and begun to catch up with the flagging Dixie Rails. Troops from each railroad never formally announce their allegiance before firing on each other, but everyone knows who's working for who. Saying so publicly, however, might get BV shut down by the new government, or incur LaCroix's arcane wrath on the fledgling Confederacy. Neither side wants to enter a public conflict at such a delicate time.

Iron Dragon and the Church of Lost Angels

Warlord Kang laid the most actual track in the previous year, but was foiled in his plan to quickly reach Lost Angels. Prior to the Civil War's cease-fire, Kang had made a deal, perhaps less than scrupulously, with the owners of the Great Northwestern. His plan was to quickly forge ahead with his line to Seattle, then buy out and link up to the Great Northwestern line which reaches all the way past Sacramento.

A recent popular vote to maintain California's status quo must have inspired the GN's owners to do the same, however. They turned Kang down in a most humiliating fashion. Kang had scheduled a public signing to take over the GN. Respected members of the press, legions of his loyal tongs, Japanese ronin in their most elegant kimonos, and visiting officials of the state's territorial government, all showed up to witness what would surely give Iron Dragon the edge it needed to win the Great Rail Wars.

Then the owners of the Great Northwestern pulled a no-show. The spectacle would be embarrassing for anyone, but for an Oriental warlord—well, let's just say Kang left the festivities in quite a huff.

Once again, everyone expected an all-out war between Kang's goons and Great Northwestern's hired guns. Once again, everyone was disappointed. Then, exactly one week after blowing off Kang's party, the owners of the Great Northwestern quietly sold their line to Iron Dragon for a paltry \$100,000, a fee that doesn't even cover the iron used in the GN's line.

Turns out GN's chairman loves his wife and especially his daughter, and a not-so-subtle

threat from Red Petals Su quickly changed his mind about selling the railroad to Kang.

Sudden Death

As you can see from the updated rail map on the previous page, the Rail Wars are about to come to a close. In the next *Epitaph*, you'll see just what we mean.

Of course, the end of one thing might just lead to the beginning of another.

High Tales of Hell on Earth

The Wasted West is in a bit of a calm right now after the events of Judgment Day told in *The Unity*. All of the major players have gone back into their respective corners to lick their wounds and figure out what they need to do next.

The good news for the heroes of the world is that the Reckoners are actually gone. Good deeds and hope can actually destroy existing Deadlands without worrying about five more sprouting up to replace them.

The Reckoners' abominations still have their power, and some are still created in the Deadlands when terror grows too strong, but their rate of growth is drastically diminished.

The Iron Alliance

That's why Jo has stepped down from the Iron Alliance. She's decided she can do more good out in the wastes than behind a desk in Junkyard. Taylor, Schwarz, and the other members of the Council pleaded with Jo to stay, but the former-housewife-turned-Grand Master of the Templars was adamant.

Her seat on the Council has been taken by Colonel Green, a hero of Judgment Day who has the support of the all-important war veterans who lead most of the outlying settlements.





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The Cult of Doom

Silas and what was left of his most violent muties turned tail back to Vegas where they found themselves in a bit of trouble. The locals were rebelling, very likely at the instigation of several infiltrators from the Iron Alliance.

Word got out that it was actually Silas who was responsible for the mutant massacre at Armana—not humans. Such a rumor might have been quickly squashed except that a Librarian somehow managed to get video of the event—even though no video cameras were present! (See the *Knowledge is Power* article in this issue for exactly how.)

The Librarian has been quietly moving about Vegas showing the footage on his palmcorder to anyone who will watch it.

Needless to say, “The Armana Tragedy,” Silas’ bloody defeat at Junkyard, and rumors that the Harbinger appeared and condemned him, has put a serious damper on the mutant king’s “administration.”

The Combine

General Throckmorton’s human troops suffered more heavily than anyone. Between their equipment failure at Junkyard and the long pursuit back to Denver, nearly 75% of the Combine’s flesh-and-blood troops were slain.

More than half of their automatons, raptors, recyclers, and other minions were destroyed or damaged and left in the field as well.

Strangest of all, the Denver AI has been completely quiet since a day after the appearance of the Ravenites (see below).

In truth, Dr. Hellstromme is attempting to hack into the Denver AI and “reboot” it. He’s been unsuccessful so far, but the AI is now aware its creator is back and has sealed itself off until it can figure out how to block him from the reboot.

In the meantime, Throckmorton’s second-in-command, Lieutenant Colonel Killian, a powerful syker from Black Lightning first mentioned in *Brainburners*, has taken control of the shattered forces.

Killian doesn’t share the AI’s ideas about the Denver Resistance making good training tools, so he’s ordered his healthy forces to track down the rebels and wipe them out.

This is a clever move on his part, because it diverts the survivors’ rage from their true leaders to the rebels.

Raven and the Worms

Raven is in something of a daze after his once-ally Dr. Darius Hellstromme somehow spirited the Reckoners off-world.

Worse, as one of the most powerful supernatural creatures on the planet, he has felt his abilities begin to wane. If enough Deadlands are destroyed, he might even lose his status as a servitor and die.

For now, he’s resting and performing rituals to determine exactly where the Reckoners have gone. His legions of undead were released and now wander forth to stir up new mischief and mayhem.

His ancient wormling friends are unhappy, to say the least. They need the Reckoners dead to reestablish themselves as gods. They are patient creatures, however, and for now are spending their days breeding new wormlings to repopulate the earth in their image.

Raven is starting to grow sick of the worms’ presence, however, and his disgust may one day turn to open fury.

Banshee Screams

The Way Out West hasn’t yet felt the effects of the Reckoners’ arrival. They escaped the Hellstromme device (as detailed in *The Unity*), and are now more-or-less mortal.

Needless to say, they are more than a little upset about this turn of events, especially at the hands of one of their own servants. But such ancient creatures are anything but stupid. They’ve assumed new forms to learn about their new environment and perhaps find a way back to Earth and away from the accursed living planet that cripples them so greatly.

Eventually, their search will bring them into contact with the skinnies, who have already sensed the Reckoners’ powerful presence on Banshee.

Look for this plot to unfold more as the story of the *Way Out West* continues.

